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Editorial

The Arroyo regime's new amnesty program

Betraying the people anew

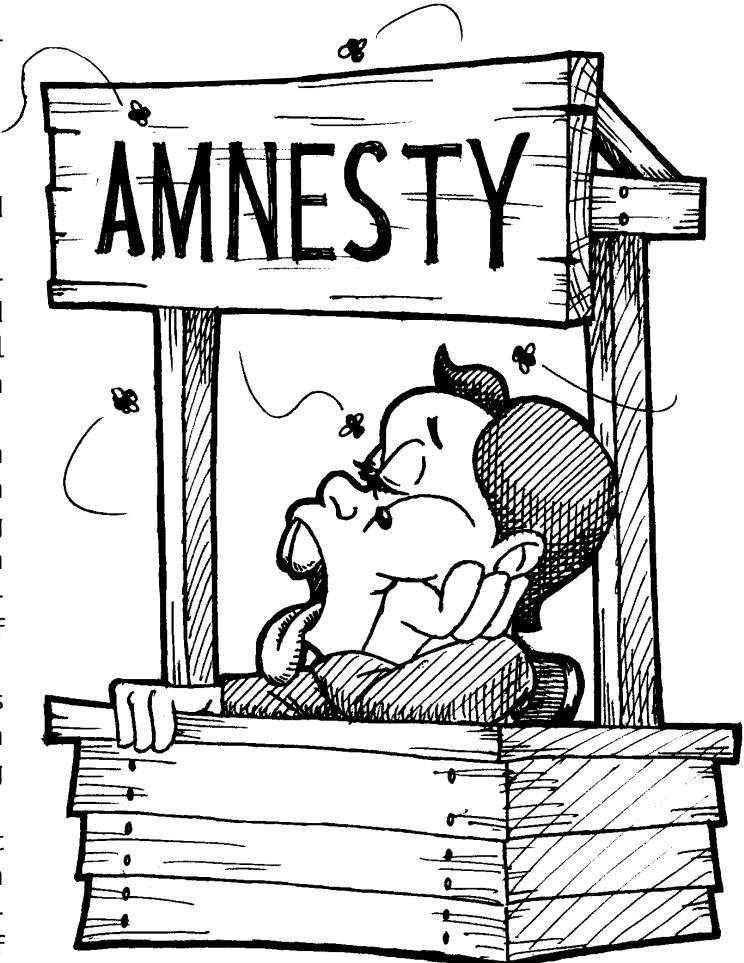
Aside from being a cheap and desperate political gimmick, the Arroyo regime's new amnesty program is another attempt by Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo to cunningly reverse the people's historic verdict against the ousted Malacañang rascals in the persons of Ferdinand Marcos and Joseph Estrada.

The new offer of amnesty has been strongly condemned by revolutionary and democratic forces and by the broad masses of the people, by the political opposition and even by many within Arroyo's own camp.

Out of her desperation to cling to power and win the forthcoming election, Arroyo is striving to obtain the support of the Marcoses and Estrada by offering them an outrightly antipeople amnesty program. In the process, Arroyo dreams of uniting the entire reactionary ruling class behind her and the line of "national unity."

The amnesty offer to the Marcoses and Estrada is in line with Arroyo's policy of secretly colluding with the opposition factions of the reactionary ruling classes.

Ever since Arroyo ascended to power, she has not ceased giving countless concessions to her rivals in the leading factions of the opposition. These concessions, which include delaying the disposition of Estrada's cases and granting him so many special privileges in prison such as allowing him to seek treatment in the US, only compromise the people's interests. Arroyo colluded with the Marcoses to restore to



them part of the sequestered plundered wealth held in escrow in several banks. The renegotiation seriously impedes the payment of compensation to thou-

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sands of victims of military violence under the Marcos dictatorship.

If Arroyo succeeds in her attempt to grant amnesty to the Marcoses and Estrada, the Filipino people who have been victims of the grave crimes of repression and plunder by the Marcos and Estrada regimes will eventually be denied justice. The people have unequivocally passed verdict on the Marcoses and Estrada for their crimes. Only the various reactionary regimes since 1986 have continued to prevent justice from taking its full course for their own selfish interests. In particular, the Arroyo regime has been blatantly trying to exploit the Marcos and Estrada cases just to haggle for political concessions. At the same time, however, she has always been made a fool of.

People's organizations as well as the reactionary opposition have filed cases of large-scale corruption against the Arroyo couple. It is but fitting that the people pass verdict on them just as they have on the Marcoses and Estrada. It is not surprising for a big-time plunderer and out-and-out opportunist

like Arroyo to have thought of granting amnesty to another big-time plunderer for their mutual interest.

The people have further lost their patience and doubt whether justice will be served at all to the ousted and present ruling clique.

All of Arroyo's amnesty programs, including the ones offered to NPA and MILF guerrillas, are no different from one another in being shameless deceptions and failed schemes. In offering such amnesty to NPA and MILF guerrillas, she hopes to deceive the people, and if at all possible, even the revolutionary forces, through these cheap gimmicks.

The revolutionary and democratic forces have ignored such overtures. Such offers of amnesty are nothing but an insult to them, since the offers presume that waging revolution is a crime.

Deceptive and treacherous offers of amnesty are not the fitting response to the long-standing clamor for justice. It is but right for the revolutionary and democratic forces and the violated and enraged people to treat with outright contempt Arroyo's cheap and

The Party, and the people's army and the movement that it leads, advance the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the puppet, fascist and reactionary state and system, and in its place, establish an independent, democratic and revolutionary state and system.

deceptive gimmicks such as amnesty.

From the very start, the revolutionary and democratic forces, human rights advocates, the victims themselves and the entire people have asserted the need for the reactionary government to rectify its unrestrained violation of their national sovereignty, freedom and democratic rights.

The Party, and the people's army and the movement that it leads, advance the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the puppet, fascist and reactionary state and system, and in its place, establish an independent, democratic and revolutionary state and system.

To help hasten and ease the process, the revolutionary forces also strive to engage the reactionary government in peace negotiations to challenge it to confront and resolve the roots of the conflict and help realize peace. Along with the negotiation process, the revolutionary forces demand that the reactionary government immediately ameliorate the people's suffering. This can be done through measures such as the cessation of government military operations, putting a stop to human rights violations, punishing the principal fascists and those with serious crimes against the people, freeing political prisoners and indemnifying victims of military violence. **AB**



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Still no agreement

In response to repeated announcements by the Arroyo regime that peace talks have resumed between itself and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, the NDFP clarified that there is as yet no formal discussion or agreement on how to reopen the negotiations. What transpired in October and November were informal preliminary talks between the NDFP and GRP peace panels.

The regime is desperately making it appear that the peace negotiations are advancing. Arroyo wants to use them in the face of her dwindling chances of winning the forthcoming election. Nevertheless, the GRP has made no meaningful and official concession that would genuinely pave the way for the continuation of the actual talks. In the first round of talks, the GRP appeared to have withdrawn its initial position insisting on a single negotiation centered around its proposed Final Peace Agreement (FPA). It was on this basis that the NDFP announced in October that the talks' resumption was drawing closer.

Towards the end, however, it turned out that the GRP still wanted to restrict the talks to the FPA when it insisted that it was necessary to sign the separate agreements all at the same time. Worse, the GRP wanted the signing to take place before the 2004 election—which was even sooner than what it had previously set with the FPA.

In November, both parties sought to resolve the obstacles to the resumption of the formal negotiations. Although meaningful talks took place, no official agreement was forged. No decision was

reached on the formal talks' reopening.

Foremost among the issues discussed were the inclusion of the CPP, NPA and Comrade Jose Maria Sison on the "foreign terrorists" list, the GRP's juking of earlier agreements that defined the framework of negotiations and its insistence on the "final peace agreement."

The NDFP has demanded the GRP's recognition of the fact that the list made by the US and certain countries in the European Union was a grave violation by the foreign powers of the rights of Comrade Sison and constituted interference in issues internal to the NDFP and GRP. The NDFP has likewise insisted that the GRP's active imitation of the US and EU's act of including the CPP, NPA and Comrade Sison in the listing is a serious violation of previously forged agreements. The NDFP panel said that the only appropriate action was for the GRP to repudiate and rectify this situation.

The GRP recognized that the listing has obstructed the negotiations. Nevertheless, it denied having anything to do with the listing—something repeatedly belied by the statements and actions of the regime's officials.

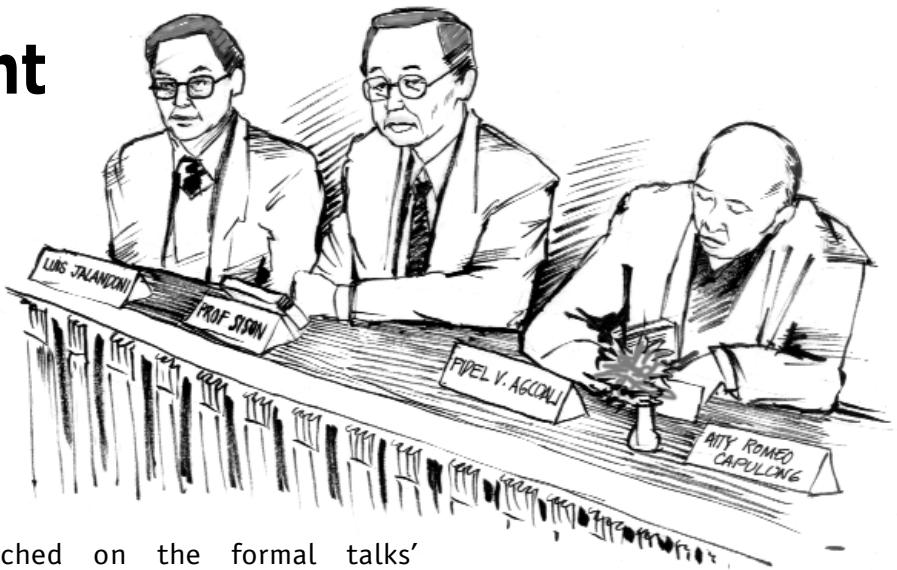
The GRP has attempted several

times to dilute the role and effectiveness of earlier agreements such as, among others, The Hague Joint Declaration and the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG). The GRP panel has insisted that they should merely be regarded as "guides" instead of serving as the framework for the negotiations. The GRP reasoned out that its constitution had to prevail. But it could offer no counter-argument to the NDFP panel's stand that the agreements had to be retained as the framework for the talks because both parties had different constitutions, governments, armies and forces.

Some advances were made on other issues such as the formation of a Joint Monitoring Committee in line with CARHRIHL's provisions and the continued operation of the reciprocal working committees on Socio-Economic Reforms, the second of four substantive issues in the talks' agenda. The GRP, however, would only begin doing its part once the formal talks resume.

As a confidence-building measure, the GRP agreed to make appropriate efforts, such as freeing political prisoners and facilitating

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Violations of workers' rights

Violations of union rights and other workers' rights grew within Gloria Arroyo's close to three years in office. According to the Center for Trade Union and Human Rights (CTUHR), there were 91 recorded cases of attacks on workers in picket lines from January to November this year, victimizing 1,857 workers.

Most of the cases involved arrests and imprisonment, attacks on picket lines, surveillance of worker-leaders, grave threats, sexual harassment and murder.

Based on CTUHR's partial reports, there were 28 cases of attacks on picket lines with 1,621 victims. There were 394 victims in nine incidents of threats on strikers and surveillance of the movements of worker-leaders. Two-hundred and three workers were injured in three incidents of beatings and truncheoning while picket lines were being dispersed.

There were ten cases of arbitrary arrests involving 50 workers. Meanwhile, 35 people were victimized in seven cases of illegal detention.

Women workers were not spared from sexual harassment. There was one recorded case of killing.

Violence occurred in the picket lines of workers at the Light Rail Transit (LRT), La Tondeña, Lepanto Mining Corporation, Nestlé Philippines, NE Poultry Processing Plant, Rustan's, Sackline Industrial corporation, San Miguel Corporation, Sulpicio Lines, Yusung ADVENTURE, Martex, Kosiphil, GOP, Reino's Chicken, PASVIL/Pascual Liner and Ren Transport. A workers' community was demolished in Parola, Tondo in Manila.

Aside from using guards, scabs and goons, management colluded with the national and local government against the workers. It used forces of the Philippine National Police (PNP), including the Regional Special Police Force, Regional Mobile



Violations of union rights and other workers' rights grew within Gloria Arroyo's close to three years in office.

Group, Special Warfare Team (SWAT) and the police of PEZA. Agents of the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), sheriffs and even barangay tanods were also involved.

The present government bears a huge responsibility for the growing number of violations of workers' rights. In Arroyo's attempt to illegalize strikes, she harshly suppresses workers and unleashes violence on them. Arroyo unbridledly suppresses workers' rights to prove her support for her capitalist masters.

AB

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the grant of indemnification to victims of human rights violations under the Marcos dictatorship. The GRP, however, wanted to reduce by P2 billion the previously agreed amount of P10 billion. There has yet been no agreement on this matter.

The NDFP rejected the GRP pro-

posal to declare a mutual ceasefire from the Christmas season until the end of the peace negotiations. Instead, the NDFP declared a unilateral cessation of offensives from December 20 to January 4, 2004 out of respect for the Christmas tradition.

In the end, the parties did not issue any joint communiqué. Neither was there any decisive offi-

cial agreement. The NDFP remains open to the continuation of the negotiations to advance the people's interests in all arenas. The GRP, however, needs to set aside its framework calling for the capitulation of the revolutionary forces and must agree on a worthy framework so that meaningful negotiations can be realized between the two opposing forces.

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Intensified exploitation, added burden

The greedy imperialists are definitely unremitting in their maneuvers to amass maximum benefit from the world's peoples. Through the World Trade Organization (WTO), multinational and transnational companies are now pushing to the hilt negotiations for the complete implementation of the General Agreement on Trade in Services or GATS.

GATS was one of the agreements reached in GATT's Uruguay Round in 1994. It involves the liberalization and deregulation of services not only in trade, but even in public institutions and utilities. GATS is among the crucial agreements covering the

agriculture, investment and trade sectors. Through GATS, foreign companies can now penetrate businesses and institutions previously reserved for local businessmen and government.

The WTO is now in the process of reviewing GATS to broaden the services covered and in the process coerce the majority of WTO member-countries that up to now have refused to enter GATS.

GATS negotiations became the focus after the collapse of negotiations for the Multilateral Agreement on Investments (MAI) in 1998, the trade negotiations in Seattle, USA in 1999 and the WTO Fifth Ministerial Meeting in Cancun, Mexico this September. The upheaval staged by small countries against the further liberalization in trade advanced by the US, EU and Japan punctuated the Cancun meeting.

Negotiations regarding GATS have now entered their most

intense phase, with the list of which services to completely liberalize and which ones to be left within the countries' jurisdiction being finalized. Imperialist countries perpetrate coercion and apply pressure tactics against semi-colonies in these negotiations.

Services covered

The WTO has no clear definition of what "service" means in the context of GATS and has only provided categories: business; communications; construction and other related engineering services; distribution; education; nature; finance; health and social services; tourism and travel; entertainment, culture and sports; and transportation, among many others.

According to the WTO Secretariat, only 42 countries have opened their hospitals to GATS. Meanwhile, 15 countries have opened related health services, such as laboratories, among others. Seventy-eight countries have opened their health insurance sectors. Compared with the number of countries that have been obliged

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Military operations during ceasefire

230 Aeta families evacuate

Two-hundred and thirty Aeta families have evacuated their homes along the Zambales-Pampanga border since December 10 to avoid intense operations launched by the 24th and 69th IB. The operations were launched in violation of the ceasefire declared by Gloria Arroyo from December 10, 2003 to January 6, 2004.

The Aeta natives began to set up camp outside the Pampanga provincial capitol on December 15

to demand the withdrawal of military forces conducting operations and the dismantling of all detachments in their area. The mass action was organized by the Central Luzon Aeta Association (CLAA) and supported by the Alyansa ng Magbubukid sa Gitnang Luzon (AMGL) and the Anakpawis party.

According to CLAA chair Nelson Mallari, the Aeta evacuees are from the sitios of Balangkas, Sentro and Barsola in Barangay Kamias, Porac, and Barangay Nabuklod, Floridablanca. The military conducted operations in these areas while the Aetas were in the thick of harvesting rice.

AB

to open sectors in other categories, the least number of countries have opened their health services, as well as their education sector. The WTO is now desperately pushing more countries to open these basic services to complete liberalization.

All-out liberalization

According to GATS, a country must bestow "Most Favored Nation" status on all countries that have entered the agreement. This means that when a country has opened its doors, all other countries must be allowed to come in.

Through the "National Treatment" policy, foreign and local companies must be granted equal rights.

The WTO mandates the withdrawal of subsidies for government social services because they pose limits to the businesses imperialists would like to set up.

It also mandates the withdrawal of restrictions and regulations on company investments in services, including the removal of local policies that ensure environmental protection and the people's health.

There is not room for countries to amend the terms of their commitment to GATS or withdraw from it altogether. The WTO has abolished countries' right to carry out their own policies contrary to GATS and may impose sanctions on any country that does not implement the agreements.

Puppet regime's response

At present, the Arroyo regime pretends to assail certain WTO policies and a number of maneuvers by its US imperialist master. Nevertheless, it continues to carry out the destructive policies of imperialist globalization in the country. The regime perpetuates and even exacerbates the liberalization of services that GATS and other programs have already opened. It also plans to open other fields of service to foreigners despite strong opposition from those in the service sector.

In 1994, the reactionary government opened to GATS the liberalization of financial services (banks and insurance), communications, transportation and tourism. The Ramos regime, meanwhile, allowed foreign corporations to control the provision of water and health services. AB



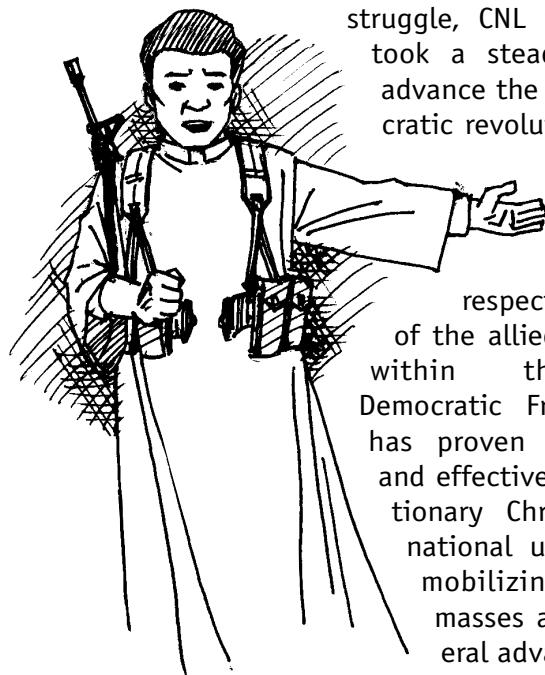
Christians for National Liberation

Gains strength, advances

Revolutionaries in the church sector successfully held the seventh congress of Christians for National Liberation (CNL) this November. CNL is a national organization of church people from various Christian sects and denominations. It represents the patriotic and revolutionary strata in the church sector.

The congress elected Fr. Servando Popolus, a Catholic priest, as the new chairperson.

In almost three decades characterized by various twists and turns in the revolutionary struggle, CNL persevered and took a steadfast stand to advance the national-democratic revolution. It continues to play an outstanding and highly respected role as one



of the allied organizations within the National Democratic Front (NDF). It has proven the important and effective role of revolutionary Christians in the national united front, in mobilizing the broad masses and in the general advance of the revolution.

In the first years of the revolutionary movement, CNL contributed greatly in defending and preserving the revolution's ranks by securing and providing refuge to cadres being pursued by the dictatorship and by providing a wide network of facilities for the use of revolutionary forces. With the eruption of the first mass actions against the dictatorship, CNL linked arms with workers and other oppressed sectors in shattering fascist terror both before the public and in the reactionary media.

More than this, CNL contributed meaningfully to strengthening the armed movement in the countryside by providing material support and deploying members to the New People's Army (NPA). The Party recognizes its



immense contribution to the initial establishment of guerrilla fronts nationwide.

In the following years, CNL implemented various tasks to strengthen and expand the revolution's ranks. This past decade, CNL members successfully struggled against the opportunist renegades and contributed to the overall victory of the Second Great Rectification Movement.

CNL was founded in 1972 in recognition of the influence of the Christian religion in Philippine society and the huge potential in organizing and mobilizing church people for national liberation and democracy in accordance with their belief. Its establishment was an organized response by church people to the immediate challenge of fighting the poverty and oppression afflicting the people.

At present, the expansion and consolidation of their organization as part of the overall revolutionary movement pose a big challenge to CNL. Most of the sector's members belong to the petty bourgeoisie, and thus may be aroused, organized and mobilized according to their national and democratic interests. In recognition of their class character, it is necessary for them to link firmly their movement with the struggle of the basic masses by continuously integrating with and participating in the struggle of workers, peasants and other oppressed and exploited sectors.

More than this, CNL members must participate in the armed struggle as the principal and decisive form of revolution. Their potential contribution to opening, recovering and consolidating guerrilla fronts as NPA Red fighters remains great.

AB

Radyo Gil-ayab in Cagayan

Another weapon in education, propaganda and cultural work



The trial broadcast of Radyo Gil-ayab was like a spark that started a prairie fire in all of Cagayan Valley.

Radyo Gil-ayab (Iloko word for "blaze"), the radio station of the revolutionary movement in Northeastern Luzon is now ablaze in the entire Cagayan Valley. After its successful trial broadcast, Radyo Gil-ayab will regularly broadcast every two months and will be disseminated in the form of compact disks and cassette tapes.

Gil-ayab aims is to clarify to the people the revolutionary

movement's stand and analysis on burning issues in the region and nationwide, transmit news on people's struggles and propagate revolutionary culture and art.

Its trial broadcast in October featured a message from NDF regional spokesperson Ka Salvador del Pueblo during Peasant Week.

The comrades and masses were completely delighted by "Paran", an adaptation of a Bombo Radyo-Cagayan adver-

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Back to back plays bring to life class culture and the spirit of Gat Amado

The staging of the back to back plays *Langaw sa Isang Basong Gatas* (Fly in a Glass of Milk) and *Panata ng Isang Lider* (A Leader's Vow) proves that revolutionary art and literature continue to advance.

Led by the Amado V. Hernandez Resource Center (AVHRC) and the Concerned Artists of the Philippines (CAP), the back to back plays began presentation in September 2003 in schools, government offices and worker and peasant communities. The presentations form part of a series of activities until September 2004 to commemorate the birth centennial of Gat Amado.

The two plays were based on two short stories written by Gat Amado. *Langaw sa Isang Basong Gatas* was first published in 1970. Using the nom de plume "Amante Ernani," Gat Amado came out

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tisement on the rottenness of jueteng (an illegal numbers game) and how it is used as a milking cow by politicians. But in this adaptation, Paran argues with his wife not on whether to place a bet in jueteng but about joining a confrontation rally of peasants to reduce interest rates on loans.

The segment "Tangguyob ti Gubat" ("War Trumpet"), on the other hand, delivered news on regional and national developments in August and September.

The masses were also elated when "Laglagipen, Ilaban Nagbannigan!" ("Never Forget to Fight For What You Worked Hard For!") was featured in the cultural section. This is a song about the people's struggle against the Community-Based Forest Management or CBFM, which is a burning issue for peasants in the region.

The first regular broadcast is set for this month. Emulating well-liked programs in the bourgeois mass media, Radyo Gil-ayab will feature additional segments such as "Toy Nagsurat a Kadasig yo" (This Writer Who Is of Your Class), a drama about the life and struggle of comrades and the masses and "Takder Proletaryo" (Proletarian Stand), a 20-minute talk show, among others.

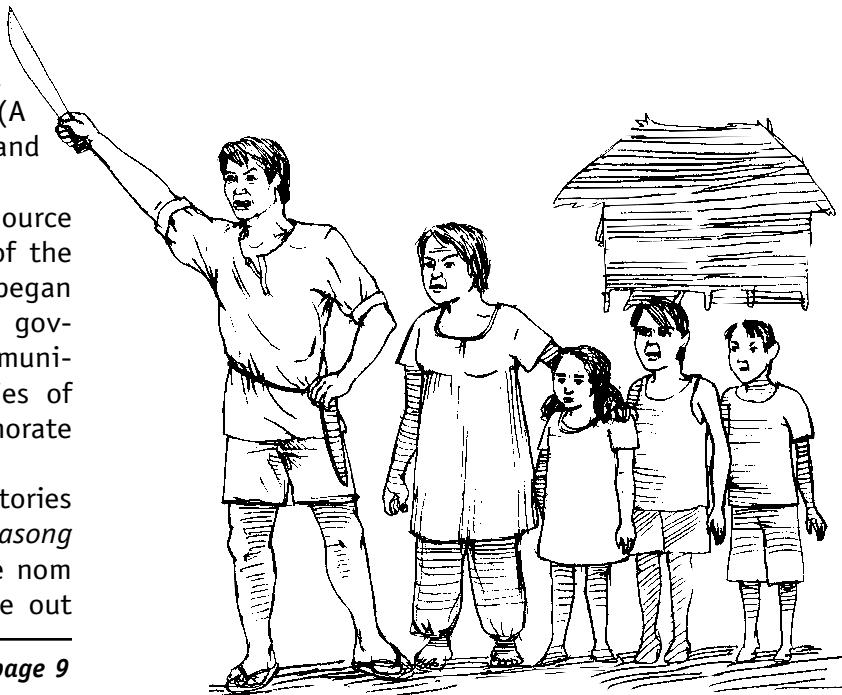
Like other guerrilla radio programs, Radyo Gil-ayab uses simple equipment and processes to come up with a broadcast. It uses the Sound Forge 5.0 computer program for recording, mixing sounds and inserting sound effects; and Adobe Premiere for editing. Other equipment used are a lapel microphone, headphones and a tape recorder. The staff approaches various guerrilla units to get voice talents. It is composed of three people who engage in mass work in between their radio work.

Producing a broadcast goes through four stages: pre-production or script writing; production or recording; editing; and finally, the reproduction of copies. A typical production usually takes from one to two weeks. Radyo Gil-ayab also plans to set up similar units or radio groups in every guerrilla front in the region.

Radyo Gil-ayab is the latest of the many propaganda forms that the revolutionary movement in Cagayan Valley now maximizes in response to the Party's call to further improve the conduct of propaganda and education work and expand their scope.

With the broadcast of Radyo Gil-ayab, it is hoped that thousands more people will be reached by revolutionary propaganda that will further raise the consciousness and militancy of comrades and the masses and further fan the flames of struggle in all of Cagayan Valley.

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"Back to back plays...," from page 8

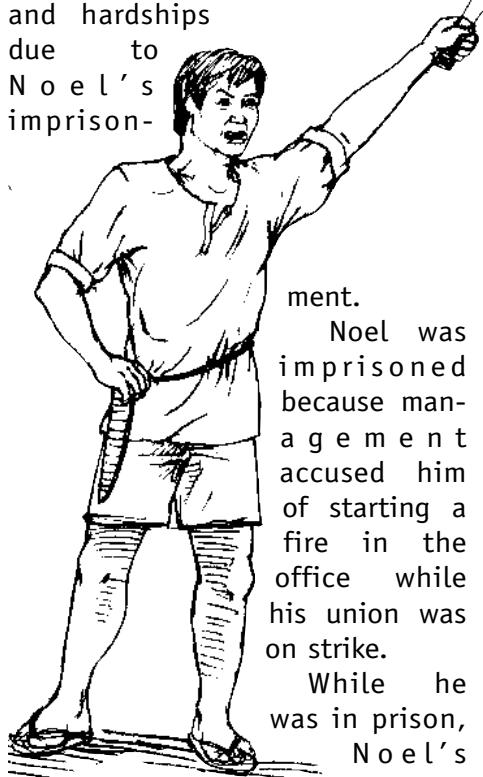
with *Panata ng Isang Lider* in *Liwayway* magazine on January 18, 1960.

Multi-awarded and militant writer-director Bonifacio Ilagan spearheaded the presentation of the plays and directed them.

Although set in the mid-1900s, the plays' themes revolve around the intense class contradictions that continue to exist in our society.

Panata ng Isang Lider

The play *Panata ng Isang Lider* is about the life of Noel, an ordinary worker and union leader. In the play, his wife Marta narrates Noel's suffering and struggles as well as their family's sacrifices and hardships due to Noel's imprisonment.



ment.

Noel was imprisoned because management accused him of starting a fire in the office while his union was on strike.

While he was in prison, Noel's

family fully grasped the importance of struggle and the hardship and sacrifice that come with it. Marta learned to stand on her own feet and face up to her fears. It was also here that Noel further witnessed the rottenness of the social system.

Upon Noel's release, he once more unstintingly devoted his full time to political action. He proudly told his wife and child, *"Each parent must be a model for his or her children. What example can we bequeath our children if we shirk the call of duty? It is better for parents to sacrifice rather than for them to pass on to their children the terror of a grim future."*

The play showed that even in the midst of the suffering endured by Noel's family, problems were merely likened to "rust removed from steel."

Marta took her husband's challenge with full courage and said smiling, "We must open ourselves. Our personal plans will change time and again."

Langaw sa Isang Basong Gatas

The play *Langaw sa Isang Basong Gatas*, on the other hand, portrayed the story of the couple Bandong and Ana and their three children. They lived serenely and farmed a hectare of land inherited from their forebears.

One day, trucks suddenly came carrying workers that would construct the Royal Lanes subdivision

in the adjacent meadow. At first, the couple admired the rapid development of the meadow which, according to Bandong, was "previously overgrown with coarse grass and burly lovegrass... and was now a small city of homes that were everyone's envy."

Later, however, such awe gave way to loathing when the subdivision developer took an interest even in their land. In cahoots with the treasurer's agents and the police, the administrator of Royal Lanes drove the family off the land because "in the eyes of the corporation, your being neighbors with Royal Lanes is like having a fly descend on a glass of milk."

The family came to be conscious of the fact that it was necessary to fight for the rights trampled on by society's ruling class.

AUDIENCES greet the plays with rounds of hearty applause. Despite some technical problems as well as difficulties related to the rudimentary equipment available in some places where the plays were staged, it is quite striking how audiences enthusiastically take to them and sustain their viewing.

Because the managers, director, actors and others involved in the productions know full well that their work is an important contribution to the effort to arouse and organize the masses, they tirelessly stage the plays in more and more areas and ceaselessly improve and develop each presentation.

They continue to resolve and overcome difficulties and other issues related to the plays' staging. These patriotic and militant cultural workers draw inspiration from Gat Amado's art and literature to further serve the Filipino people.

The staging of the back to back plays *Langaw sa Isang Basong Gatas* (Fly in a Glass of Milk) and *Panata ng Isang Lider* (A Leader's Vow) proves that revolutionary art and literature continue to advance.

MILF frees 4 captured soldiers

THE Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) freed four prisoners of war in Datu Piang, Maguindanao on December 18. The soldier-captives were released a day after both parties agreed to a cessation of hostilities.

The four soldiers were troops of the 7th IB captured on December 16 after an encounter with the MILF in Barrio Gawang, Datu Saudi Ampatuan town. They were then supposedly carrying out pursuit operations against the criminal Pentagon Gang. Twenty-one soldiers and nine MILF guerrillas were killed in the fighting that ensued. There are still 12 missing military and CAFGU elements. An AFP helicopter was also damaged after it was fired upon by the MILF.

Country's debt continues to swell

THE Philippines' debt continues to swell due to the enormous government budget deficit.

Based on September data, overall Philippine debt has come to 68.7% of the gross national product (GNP). Huge budget deficits have plagued the government in the last nine years beginning in 1989. Public debt has ballooned to P5.162 trillion which is even greater than the value of the overall economic output.

Almost half of the P864.8 billion proposed national budget for 2004 (or P542.2 billion) will go to debt service.

Meanwhile, in order for the bankrupt government to earn funds, the International Monetary Fund has recommended the imposition of additional taxes on oil, beer, cigarettes and text messaging.

Saddam Hussein captured

AMERICAN forces captured Saddam Hussein, president of Iraq, in Tikrit, his birthplace, on December 14. American soldiers discovered Saddam in his hiding place inside a hole in the ground behind a house.

The Bush regime immediately bragged about Saddam's capture especially since throughout its occupation of Iraq, there was no other news save for the growing number of American soldier-casualties and the worsening condition of the Iraqi people.

Nevertheless, Hussein's capture has not dissipated the intense anger and opposition of the Iraqi people as well as the many problems attendant to the US occupation of Iraq.

The following day, two police stations were blown up

in succession, killing nine people and wounding 20 others.

The Iraqis continue to strongly oppose the foreign occupation of their country. Protests continue against the zoning and strafing of their communities and the unwarranted arrests and detention, maltreatment and abuse of Iraqi men.

Meanwhile, the formation of a reliable puppet army that would serve as the backbone in establishing an Iraqi puppet government poses a big problem to the US. Three-hundred Iraqi soldiers deserted on December 13 from the 700-man Iraqi battalion being trained by the US to replace the US forces. They objected to the low wages paid by the occupiers.

Cuba braces for US invasion

CUBA'S regular troops and people's militia are both actively preparing for a possible invasion in the face of new and escalated threats from US imperialism. It may be recalled that in the past several months, US Pres. George Bush has once again been referring to the so-called "axis of evil" and has broadened its scope. Besides Iraq, North Korea and Iran, he has included Cuba and Syria as

well.

Cuba's defense system is based on the concept of a "war of all people" which is seen as the only way to successfully fight off any US military aggression. It is in accordance with National Defense Law No. 75 that requires every Cuban to undergo training and develop his or her own fighting ability in the event that the US goes ahead with its invasion of Cuba.

US imperialism honors Ople, 76. Foreign Secretary Sec. Blas Ople died in a Taiwanese hospital on December 14. US imperialism and Ople's fellow reactionary politicians praised him to high heavens for his pro-imperialist and antipeople deeds.